

DRACULA'S

SPINECHILLERS

ANNUAL



SCARY
STRIP STORIES
AND TALES TO
TREMBLE
BY!!





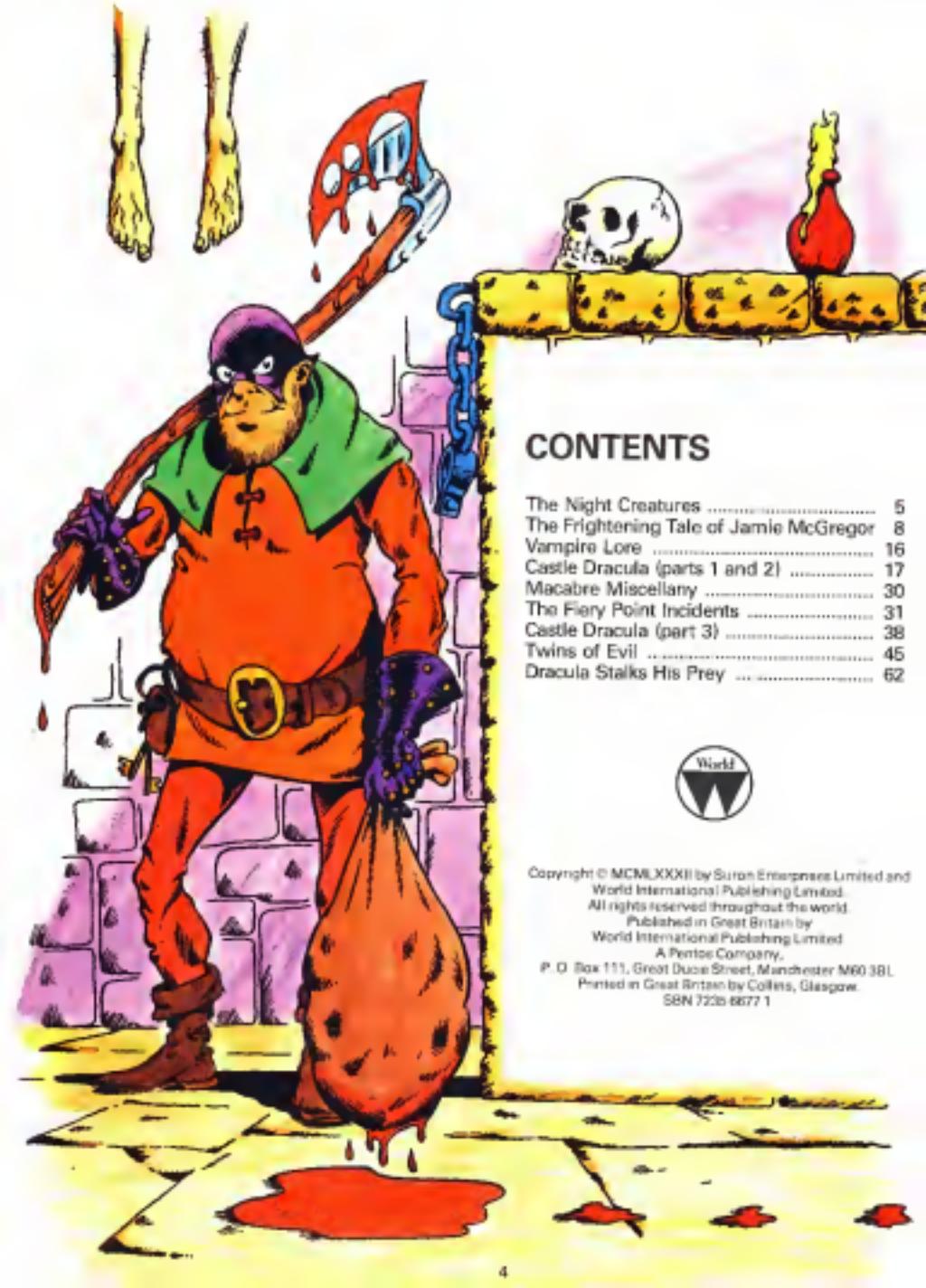
JOHN
HAYES
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DRACULA'S SPINECHILLERS



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£2.50



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The Night Creatures

The velvet blackness of the sky, punctuated by winking stars, formed a perfect background for the huge, white ball which exuded mystical moonglow over the earth's landscape and lighted the country road over which Edward Calvin drove carefully.

The road itself twisted its way between Stramford and Bollinham, two quiet villages which lay on the southern side of the moors.

Calvin was taking this road as a short cut to a lonely manor, situated some five miles to the west of Bollinham.

He stopped the car, switched on the interior light, and re-read Freddie Sattene's letter.

"... Sorry to be such a nuisance, old boy, but there are things going on around here that are inexplicable.

I don't want to say too much in this letter. On the contrary,

I would prefer to tell you about it personally. Perhaps you would pay me a visit. Say this weekend. You will not be sorry, for the subject at hand is quite possibly connected with your particular interest. Please do your best to make it, for I desperately need your help.

Best regards,
Freddie

Replacing the letter in his wallet, Calvin then studied his road-map again. Just two miles away, between his present position and the manor house, lay the village of Pendle, and it was there that he hoped to obtain petrol, for it was still early evening, early enough, perhaps, to knock-up a garage proprietor.

He refolded the map,

switched off the interior light and drove on.

The village of Pendle was deserted as he drove into the main street, but down on the left a garage sign, still lit, gave out a neon brilliance which was obviously out of place amongst the drab, dark buildings.

The proprietor grudgingly obliged him with petrol but only after he had produced an extra pound note as a bribe.

Ten minutes later he was moving on, through the village. Beyond the lights of the garage all was darkness again, but with the aid of the fitful moonlight and headlights full-on, he managed to negotiate the narrow, twisting, country lanes.

He had travelled but two minutes from the vicinity of the garage and was moving through a densely-wooded

area when suddenly he slammed his foot onto the brake and stared incredulously through the wind-screen, for coming down the lane towards him and outlined starkly by the headlights, was a black, cowled and robed figure.

Another five yards and he would have been killed outright, or at the worst, seriously injured by the approaching car.

Calvin sat staring at the figure in shocked amazement, for it continued to approach directly towards him, apparently oblivious to the presence of the vehicle, or purposely ignoring it. When it appeared obvious that the figure was actually going to collide with the car bonnet, Calvin reached for the door handle. Then he gasped and rubbed his eyes in perplexity, for the black-robed figure seemed to dematerialise before him.

Calvin sat there for a few moments, lost in thought, then the ghost of a smile flickered across his face as understanding dawned on him. He knew now what Freddie had meant in his letter, when he had said, "The subject at hand is quite possibly connected with your particular interest."

He had meant Black Magic.

Calvin was quite familiar with the history of the Pendle witches and it didn't surprise him in the least to find that the descendants had continued with the evil aberrations of their ancestors.

Climbing back into the car after first checking the immediate area he drove the remaining two miles to Slartene Manor.

Half an hour after his experience with the hooded figure, Calvin was seated in the study of the manor, listening intently to Freddie's story.

"It began," said Freddie distractedly, "about two months ago. I was out walking my dog in the woods

nearby, at about eleven one moonlit night, when I suddenly came across about two dozen people in a clearing. They were all dressed like monks, in black habits, you know, hood and gown and all that – and they were dancing around in a circle, like souls possessed.

"In the centre of the circle, another figure, with what looked like the head of a goat on its shoulders, was proceeding to plunge a wicked-looking knife into a young woman who lay on a kind of altar-stone before him.

"Shocked and astonished as I was, I immediately dashed forward in an effort to save the young woman's life.

"Then suddenly, to my amazement, I found that some hidden power was blocking my progress, almost as if I had run smack into a force field of some description.

"Anyway, as I stood there, a shocked and helpless witness, I saw the knife descend and rip into the woman's stomach."

Freddie's face twisted in grief and undisguised disgust then, as he added, "The next thing that happened, Ed, was so horrible, so disgusting and so foul, that it turns my stomach, even now, whenever I think of it."

Calvin leaned forward in his chair and placed a hand on Freddie's arm.

"Take your time, old boy," he said soothingly. "Have a whisky and soda and pull yourself together, before you continue."

"I'm okay," Freddie said, perhaps a shade too sharply.

"Anyway, as I was saying, what happened next was sickening and could only have been enacted by disciples of the devil himself. As the warm red blood



began to pump from the unfortunate young woman, those . . . those, heathens ran forward with goblets to catch it in and then, damn it, they began to drink it."

Calvin rose to his feet, poured two stiff drinks and handed one to Freddie.

"And then," he prompted after his friend had sipped the raw whisky.

"I'm afraid I don't remember anything after that," Freddie replied sheepishly. "I suppose I must have fainted or something, for the next thing that I remember was being assisted into bed by Smathers, my butler."

Calvin said nothing to that. Instead, he sat, thinking deeply.

"There is something else," Freddie added a few moments later.

Calvin's eyebrows lifted.

"What?" he asked in surprise.

"You might think me mad, or mistaken, or something," Slattene said, with excitement underlying his words, "but just two days ago, I saw that same young woman, the one who had been so horribly murdered before my very eyes, walking down the main street in Pendle."

"What?" Calvin gasped the word again. But this time, not merely in surprise but incredulously.

Freddie glanced at him sharply.

"There, I said that you would think me mad or something," he said bitterly.

Calvin rose to his feet again and placed a comforting hand on Freddie's shoulder.

"Hold on, old boy," he protested mildly, "I didn't say that I didn't believe you. On the contrary, you are neither mad nor mistaken about what you saw."

"A few centuries ago,



there was a coven of witches in the Pendle area who, by making a pact with the devil, were guaranteed immunity against death by any other means than burning or being dealt a blow with a crucifix. That young woman you saw being 'sacrificed' must have been a descendant of this coven, playing her part in the 'sacrificial ceremony' of their black mass.

"As it happens, old friend," he added with a grin, "I had just been studying the old legends and folklore of Pendle when your letter arrived."

Now it was Freddie's turn to raise inquisitive eyebrows.

"You mean to say then," he queried sharply, "that anyone in this area could be one of them?"

Calvin nodded. "Even that surly brute who served me with petrol earlier," he smiled.

Freddie began to look really worried then.

"But they must have seen me watching them that night," he exclaimed in horror. "And in that case, they could be after my blood, and I mean that literally."

"Nonsense," Calvin said scornfully, "if that were the case, they would have had ample time to destroy you, before I was even sent for. And they haven't tried . . . have they?"

Freddie shook his head, then laughed in nervous relief.

"I suppose I'm just jumping at shadows."

At that moment Smathers coughed discreetly from the doorway and announced that dinner was served.

"Calm your fears, Freddie, old pal," Calvin said light-heartedly as they walked into the dining room. "Nothing will harm you, now that I am here to take good care of you."

They sat down and ate a hearty meal.

Beyond the dining room door, Smathers smiled at the young woman who had done the cooking.

Smiling in return, the anaemic-looking woman glanced down at the strychnine bottle in her hand. Then, turning away into the kitchen again, she used her free hand to scratch at the scars on her stomach . . .



The Frightening Tale of Jamie McGregor

The incident I now wish to relate took place in the year 1775 – and a monstrous, fearful incident it was, to be sure. It concerned one James Todd McGregor – Jamie to his close friends – who came to The Purple Thistle, an inn but a morning's journey from here by horseback, to find solace and strength from the country air – following a deal of study which had taxed his resources greatly.

The young gentleman was (as he thought at the time) destined for an exceptional career in the medical profession but subsequent unforeseen events prevented its full flowering. Indeed, since their occurrence, I have come to the conclusion – along with the great poet Shakespeare –

that there are more things in heaven or hell than we dream of! And I must hold in awe the ever present powers of evil, as I do, and the eternal and, finally, triumphing powers of good.

Eight years ago, then, James Todd McGregor was a stocky fellow, with dark intelligent eyes, fierce as a bull's, and a tousled, curly mop of wavy hair, which was as black as peat. But that he should come here from the Lowlands at that time of year – November – is quite beyond my comprehension, for surely as a Lowland Scot he must have known with what severe weather he would have to contend. But there! – the young are often brash and wilful, and this is the kind of temperament that I have, in

telling the tale, endowed him with, for, as I have suggested, only a young fool would have come to these parts at the onset of winter.

Even now it is November, and the eight years have fled by, and as I sit here at my desk to write, sleet drives across the glen beyond, like a plague of ravening locusts. My stout casements rattle, and indeed it would surprise me not if this house, so solid and well-built, should, with the next gust, fly heavenwards! And although the thought of meeting Saint Peter before my time does not in the least daunt me – being a God-fearing man who attends the kirk most regularly – I should prefer to remain here in Scotland until my destined time for departing this planet comes, for I have much to do, and much that I must understand.

My name is Stuart Craige, by the way, and I am the local physician hereabouts, and live at Stirling House with my wife, Kirsty, and my two daughters, Fiona and

Margaret. I am not young, but then, neither am I old, but at that time of life when a man turns from the things of the world to consider the life beyond. And in my considerings and research into these matters, I have perused many books left me by my grandfather, an alchemist, occultist, philosopher and diarist, and it has seemed to me of late that I have turned the key of a great black door, the door into the primitive mind, in which are stored all the instinctual desires, passions, lusts and savagery, of both man and beast.

But I must on with my tale! So, imagine, if you will, a sombre afternoon in the month of November, in the year 1775, when James Todd McGregor - I will call him Jamie hereafter - having dined well at The Purple Thistle, commanded the landlord to bid the ostler fetch his horse so that he might ride through the glens and take exercise.

And this request Robert McKenzie, the landlord, followed, but gave his guest sound warning that he return to the inn before dusk, since the Glen of the Lost Souls was a powerfully wicked place by night.

With McKenzie's admonition ringing in his ears, young Jamie strides across the cobbled courtyard to the stables, where Joseph Cox, the ostler, having made ready Tom, Jamie's gelding, waits, bridle in hand.

"Ah, thank you, Joseph! Here is money for your trouble," he says, and, mounting: "It is sad that although I am learning to mend the human body, I have no capacity for mending the treacherous weather!"

"Ha-ha! Yes, sad indeed, my fine young sir!" the

ostler replies and, gazing up into the sky, ventures to add: "And it will be worse before it is better, I am thinking!"

"Do you think so?" says Jamie. "Then I had better follow your master's advice and return before the onset of darkness!"

Old Joseph looks at Jamie then - or so I imagine in my mind's eye - and then a flash of genuine terror contorts his features. "It is the Glen of the Lost Souls that you need to be fearful of... and those creatures that do walk abroad there after the eye of the day is closed," he warns. "For we do not lightly call a glen by such a name - so forlorn, yet so accursed!"

The old ostler's words strike fear into young Jamie's heart, but, being of a robust, optimistic disposition at the time, the feeling is presently dispelled, and soon he is urging Tom to gallop, at full tilt, over the mountain paths.

A strong wind in his face, with, from time to time, skirmishes of icy rain, he nevertheless proceeds to range our countryside with vigour and with joy, his observant mind noting the limpness of the brown bracken, denoting weeks and weeks of rain, and the dearth of those delightful glowing orange berries on the ravaged rowans.

Nevertheless, Jamie McGregor is, at this point in time, enjoying his newfound freedom and is finding the atmosphere of the glens exhilarating, and a welcome change from months and months of browsing intently over medical treatises!

Tom, his horse, is enjoying himself also, and flies forth into the teeth of the wind like the famed Pegasus, his tail streaming like a white plume. And he worries not a jot about the rain's wild saracens, but sniffs, snorts and gallops with unaccustomed zest.



and energy, wherever his master would go.

They have covered ten miles or so when Tom's black muzzle disappears into thick cloud and, next, Jamie is enveloped.

Poor Tom shivers with fear, but his young master commands him to ride on. However, in doing so, Tom makes a halfhearted leap at a scarcely visible stone wall—and sprawls over it, flinging Jamie, helter-skelter, into the next field.

A violent pain shoots into Jamie's right ankle, and within minutes he can feel a tender swelling. Staggering to his feet, his head reeling with the fall, he retrieves Tom from his ungainly position by tempting him with the crisp apple he has taken from his pocket, and by pulling gently on the reins. And now, hobbling forward—the blind leading the blind—

Jamie experiences a sudden, genuine flash of panic, and hopes he and Tom have not, by ill luck, happened upon the evil and forbidden glen!

But presently, the cloud disperses, and the way ahead is clear.

They are in a glen, certainly, but not one that looks at all malevolent, even on a November afternoon. Indeed, yonder Jamie espies an imposing residence and, since the pain in his ankle is now excruciating, he heads for it, as though to a sanctuary, and raps on the door.

In a little while he hears a shuffling through the hall and some person coughing and spluttering in disgusting, phlegmy fashion. Then the door creaks, and after this an ancient piping voice says: "Be ye gone from here! The McModdys do not

welcome the stranger!" With these forbidding words, the heavy door swings shut.

So Jamie raps again. And, when no answer comes—yet again!

"Do be a sensible fellow!" he pleads. "You see, my poor horse and I did tumble a mile back and are now both lame. Tom does sweat profusely, and I—well, I am in the severest discomfort, the trouble being a contusion and vast swelling in my right ankle. So hurry now, there's a good fellow—and, as a Christian man, do me the kindness to open the door!"

Comes the man's scathing tone: "Kindness? . . . Christian? He-he-he! I am thinking such luxury as that, you will not be finding here."

Nevertheless, the door is drawn back slowly, and Jamie is then confronted by





the ugliest and meanest countenance he has ever witnessed. "So! It is as I thought. A stronger!" the ugly man scoffs.

"I cannot help being that, and I am in need - which perchance you might be at some time in the future" answers Jamie.

The servant screws up his face, regarding Jamie with extreme mistrust. "Och, well!" he exclaims. "Stable your nag round the back," - he indicates the rear of the house - "then rap on the kitchen door. No doubt your ankle will be attended to well enough there! And you may even receive a few scraps of your Christian daily bread," he sneers. "He-he-he-he-he-he!" And with that, the great oak door smashes to.

Hobbling, and in a great deal of pain, Jamie stifles his resentment towards the uncouth, ill-mannered servant and, taking Tom by his bridle, ventures round to the back of the house.

There he discovers the stables, where, rather unwillingly, he hands Tom over to a sour-faced groom, whom he instructs with regard to the unfortunate animal's welfare.

Then, he limps back over the uneven cobbles of the courtyard to the kitchen door, on which he raps very vigorously.

The door is opened cautiously, and there before him is a giant of a woman in a scrupulously laundered apron and frilled cap. Her eyes glint as polished jet and are as penetrating as a gimlet.

"Come in!" she says, her voice clear and cold as the lochs around here. "Samuel tells me your ankle has been hurt in a fall . . ."

"Yes, it is even so!" replies Jamie, his stout young heart quailing somewhat at the sight of this chalk-faced, black-eyed soul.

"Then sit you down and I shall attend to it without delay," she urges. "I am

Jean McModdy, sister of William McModdy, the widowed master of this house - Grey Shadows - and I venture to ask you your name, and why you come to these glens in the dark of the year?"

Jamie finds himself telling her - perhaps it is those penetrating eyes of hers that compel him - and is soon surprised to find that Miss McModdy, although rather detached, is courteous and welcoming. And as they chatter, Jamie comes to the realisation that here is a woman of character, with great reserves of strength, kindness, and motherliness, but who, apart from being extremely lonely, has an elusive, secretive quality about her. It is as though she is protecting a family mystery, which she will guard until doomsday, with her life's blood.

A dazzling vision now enters, setting Jamie McGregor's young heart beating wildly. It is a young



And at this, Fiona draws her slim white hand away from Jamie's and hurries from the room.

And so it came to pass that Jamie stayed that evening, partaking of the delicious pigeon pie, and making an abortive attempt to get to know the McModdys - a strange-looking bunch on account of their rather long, pointed teeth. And although the pie sat in his stomach well, and the claret warmed him, not a word would the men of the clan speak, but only glowered at him with all the suspicion of a family of sheepdogs commanded to guard a farmyard. However, smile after smile passed between the lovely Fiona and himself, and by the end of the evening Jamie was enraptured!

Jamie was to stay three days and three nights at the house called Grey Shadows, at the end of which time his ankle, having been sprained rather than broken, was practically mended. And Tom's injured fetlock had responded to poultices and was by then better also.

lady, the only daughter of the house, Miss Fiona McModdy. Her hair streams to her waist and her diaphanous white gown sweeps the stone floor.

"Isn't dinner ready yet, Aunt Morag? It is well after sunset!" she says.

"Not quite, my hiny, but will be shortly. The crust of the pigeon pie is browning nicely," Miss McModdy, her aunt, replies.

"Then I shall tell my father and brother they will have to wait a while, but it is for who is complaining the most!"

"Ah - and is it not always

so? But he will have to bide his time, just like the others - so hurry and tell him he must be patient! Oh, but first you must meet our guest for the evening - and possibly for a little longer than that - Mr James Todd McGregor."

Jamie bows and takes Fiona's hand, which he kisses lightly, and as the two gaze into each other's eyes, they fall in love. Indeed, they cling together so that Miss McModdy interrupts them abruptly, saying "Come, come, Fiona! Away with you - and deliver my message to that ravenous brother of yours!"

During the time that Jamie was a guest at the house, his love for Fiona grew, and hers for him; but, as I have before indicated, the McModdy men were as dour as can be imagined, and only tolerated Jamie's presence by reason of their acceptance of the ancient Scots tradition of hospitality.

Now the nights he spent there were disturbing nights indeed, and he was plagued by restlessness, fever and the most fantastic dreams.

'Perhaps it is the chillness of the November atmosphere, sharp with frost, that worries me,' he thought. 'Or the tug of the waxing moon, which is affecting my constitution.'

But when he heard a pack of wolves howling, hour after hour, from the heart of the glen, hour after hour, and night after night, he grew sick and weary and enervated, and the fresh bloom of youth vanished from his cheeks. So by day he yawned and yawned, and by night he read, by the light of a candle, to while away his time...

But let me interrupt my tale a moment to bring you back to the present time, 1783, and to Stirling House, my home, so as to let you know what is happening here.

Just a few minutes ago, my wife, Kirsty, brought in my supper, a steaming hot beverage stirred by her own fair hand, which took the chill out of my middle-aged bones and raced through my system with the tingling fire of a good Scots whisky! My wife had much to say about the servants in the kitchen, but my pretty daughters, Fiona and Margaret, did their share of chattering too, though on a much lighter note, for they needs must discuss the gowns they intend wearing at Fiona's ball: for my eldest girl is to marry shortly, and

the Ball is to be a celebration at which I shall announce her engagement.

But now I think I can hear them ascending the stairs to bed! So there will be no more interruptions this evening, and I shall finish the tale of James Todd McGregor though it be well past midnight when I do finish...

So back to the year 1775 once again!

On his last evening, Jamie says his tender farewells to Fiona McModdy and, kissing her lily hand, time and time again, vows he will return after seven days have passed, to ask her father for her hand in marriage.

But as he mounts his trusty Tom, not another McModdy deigns to come to the door, to bid him good-



bye and God speed. However, as he turns his head to wave yet again to Fiona, the tall figure of Morag McModdy fills the threshold, and he hears her voice cry out with the utmost urgency. 'Ride like the wind, for the moon is full – and the souls will walk this night!'

And as Jamie gallops forth into the moonlight, he says, to Tom, his horse: 'Now what did she mean by that old fellow?'

But, though Tom pricks his ears and thinks a good deal, not a word does he answer! And since Jamie is

intoxicated with the beautiful face of Fiona McModdy, which he sees every minute in front of his eyes, Morag McModdy's words of warning are extinguished instantly, as a candle flame by a snuffer.

Ripe is the moon, and Jamie and Tom are as ill as fiddles, though the air be chill and spicy with frost, though there is scarcely a berry or leaf on the skeletal rowans, though the wind pierces like the looks of Morag McModdy!

As he spurs Tom on with a

says Jamie: "Take care! would you have me lame again, so soon?" Then he rights himself and urges the frightened animal to be brave and venture on. "As fast as you can, my boy, like lightning - away . . . away!" he commands. And away Tom gallops, as fast as his weakened fetlock will allow.

Yet another shape scurries to the right, another to the left, then, as Jamie turns his head, sensing something following, his hair bristles, for he and his horse are not alone, but are being followed closely by more of

for the first time Jamie is able to see the creatures' faces.

"Heaven help me!" he cries at the top of his voice. "It is the evil glen itself I am in!"

"Evil, indeed!" says a voice - and a figure clad in a white diaphanous gown flies towards him, grabbing the reins.

"Fiona, darling!" cries Jamie, and halts his horse.

But the woman who leers at him in the light of the full moon is but a travesty of his beauteous lover. A fiend, a devil, a harpy! And yet, it is Fiona McModdy indeed!



Tickle of his whup, Jamie shouts with gusto: "How welcome a fine bran mash will be to you, my beauty, and a jolly hot toddy to me - when we reach the inn again. The Purple Thistle!"

But presently a cloud veils the moon and a sinister shadow scurries across their path, some ten yards away. Then a wolf-howl rends the night.

Tom halts so suddenly that he nearly flings Jamie from his back, and, "Begad!"

the sinister beasts. Now crawling like wolves, now standing like men, they pluck at Tom's tail and tug at his mane. Now humped like dwarfs, now looming like giants, they snatch at Jamie's cloak, or grasp his ankles, or violently tear out his hair!

They howl to cause the blood to run cold, they bark like hounds in pursuit of a fox.

Then the moon blooms full, for the cloud clears and

And now she and the ravening beasts tear him from his horse - and Tom speeds away. Away, away, away, into the night! And Jamie's face is scratched by predatory claws and his legs bitten by gleaming, moon-white teeth which are sharp as needles. But, with a tremendous spurt, he races away from the evil place...

Over the heather he goes as fast as the wind . . . the pack in pursuit, in pursuit!



And he by a miracle finds the speed of a stag . . . of a panther . . . of a wily hare, inner and unknown resources giving him invisible wings which his human mind can not.

And panting, panting, his heart beating wildly, he heads for a fishing river — the pack pursuing, ever pursuing. With a tremendous effort he reaches the bank . . . and dives into the icy water.

As his arms thresh out, the howls of the pack echo through the glen — the Glen of Lost Souls; but fainter and fainter they grow as he braves the river to safety — the safety of the land across the border.

And when he reaches The Purple Thistle, there he finds Tom, sweating and panic-stricken; but both man and beast are happy to be inhabiting a sane world once again. Soon Tom is fed and stabled, and Jamie's wounds bathed and bound. And then they sleep, soundly as babes, till the light of dawn.

"Did you not know of the McModdy clan, the Macdadh-alladh, the were-wolves of that glen?" asked Robert McKenzie, the landlord, at breakfast.



"How could I? I am a stranger!" said Jamie.

"Och, so! But the tale of the McModdy clan is as old as these hills, and I thought that . . ."

"That we Lowlanders too, might have heard it. Not so! But as old as the hills? Then you mean that there are others who have suffered as I?"

"Indeed, yes. Many! And the powers of evil are far from being conquered yet!"

And that is the tale of Jamie McGregor — almost!

but I've a little more to tell . . .

Didn't I tell you that my eldest daughter was soon to be married? Didn't I tell you that Jamie never was to become the eminent physician he had once hoped to be?

Then the end is as follows . . .

Jamie is my locum, and though still suffering from nightmares and fever from time to time, he is much improved, and soon is to marry Flora, my daughter, at the kirk in our beautiful glen. And though father-in-

laws and young bridegrooms do not very often become firm companions, Jamie and I are just that: for we share an interest in supernatural phenomena. And in particular — have you guessed? — in werewolves.

VAMPIRE LORE

What is a vampire? One belief was that it was an evil spirit which took over the body of a corpse and used it for its own wicked purposes. But a more popular suggestion was that it was a person who had been so wicked in life that he was not allowed to rest in peace in death. Instead he became one of the living-dead, gaunt and deathly pale, feeding on the blood of others by biting the necks of his victims who, in turn, became vampires themselves as a result!

Vampires also varied in appearance ... according to where they 'lived'.

European vampires had hair on the palms of their hands, some had red hair and a harelip, while every Bavarian vampire slept with its left eye open and its thumbs linked ... spreading plague among cattle!



A Chinese vampire drew great strength from the light of the full moon, unlike most other vampires who feared light. Mexican vampires had skeleton-like heads, while Moravian vampires threw off their shrouds before attacking their victims. But it seems extremely hard to believe that Albanian vampires wore high-heeled shoes!

There were many ways people tried to keep themselves safe from a vampire ... and its poisonous bite. Those brave enough to open the coffin of a vampire tried sprinkling the creature's corpse with chalk and holy water, others put an iron stake through the creature's heart as it rested in its grave by day.

Some believed that the best day to tackle a vampire was Saturday - the one day when the vampire was believed to be powerless to leave its grave.

How to find a vampire? Well, in some countries a virgin boy, riding a black virgin stallion, was led through a churchyard. The tomb where the stallion first halted was presumed to be that of a vampire.

part one

Castle Dracula

PREARED AS HE IS, HARKER CAN HARDLY SUPPRESS A SHUDDER AT THE SCENE OF DESOLATION.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREST IT LOOMED, CASTLE DRACULA... A DARK, FOREBODING PLACE IN A THICK FOREST OF DEAD TREES. FOR AROUND THE CASTLE NOTHING GREW AND NO BIRDS COULD BE HEARD OR SEEN, ALMOST AS IF A PLAGUE HAD VANQUISHED ALL LIFE FROM THE AREA. IT WAS TO THIS REPULSIVE ESTATE JONATHON HARKER HAD COME, FROM NOT TOO DISTANT KARLSTADT, FOR THE ESTATE'S OWNER HAD NEED OF A LIBRARIAN AND HARKER HAD REASON TO ACCEPT THE APPOINTMENT.

DWARFED BY THE SURROUNDINGS, HE WALKS OVER THE CASTLE'S PORTICE KNOWING HE HAS A JOB TO DO AND AN APPOINTMENT TO KEEP WITH COUNT DRACULA.

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN UNDER HIS HAND AND HARKER WALKS INTO AN ALMOST STYGIAN DARKNESS, CUT ONLY BY THE WEAK LIGHT OF DAY FROM THE OVERCAST SKY OUTSIDE.

NO ONE GREETES HIS ARRIVAL, THOUGH BEFORE HIM A LARGE TABLE LOOMS UPON WHICH A MEAL HAS BEEN SET. BESIDE THE FOOD IS A LETTER ADDRESSED TO HIM.



HARKER HAS JUST FINISHED HIS MEAL WHEN HE HEARS A WEAK, PLEADING VOICE BEHIND HIM...

YOU WILL HELP ME, WON'T YOU?



WITHOUT ANSWERING, THE GIRL RUNS AWAY...

MR. HARKER? I'M GLAD YOU ARRIVED SAFELY. I AM COUNT DRACULA AND I WELCOME YOU. I APOLOGISE FOR NOT BEING HERE EARLIER.



UNFORTUNATELY MY HOUSEKEEPER IS AWAY AT THE MOMENT. HOWEVER I THINK YOU WILL FIND THAT EVERYTHING HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR YOUR COMFORT.







A FULL DAY HAS ELAPSED. IT IS LATE AFTERNOON WHEN HARKER BEGINS TO AWAKEN, BACK IN HIS OWN ROOM...



A SUDDEN REMEMBRANCE OF THE PREVIOUS DAY CLEARS HIS CLOUDY BRAIN...



FINDING THE DOOR LOCKED ONCE MORE, HARKER SLIDES THROUGH THE WINDOW...



A ND HIDES HIS PRECIOUS DIARY IN THE FOREST BEYOND CASTLE DRACULA...



D OWN INTO THE DANK MAUSOLEUM HE STALKS, PUSH DRAWING EVER CLOSER.





THE
MALLET
RISES

A
AND FALLS!

RELEASED AFTER
A COUNTLESS YEARS, THE
BODY REVERTS TO ITS TRUE
AGE BEFORE HARKER'S
ASTONISHED EYES!

BUT TURNING TO THE
SECOND COFFIN, THE
VAMPIRE HUNTER
REALISES IN HORROR...

YES, MR. HARKER,
EMPTY CHOOSING THE
GIRL FIRST YOU MADE
A BIG MISTAKE. IT
WILL BE YOUR
LAST...



part
two

The Curse Spreads

AT THE HOME OF ARTHUR AND MINA HOLMWOOD...



YOU SEE, HE WAS A... COLLEAGUE
OF MINE. I WENT TO VISIT HIM AT
CASTLE DRACULA...



I WALKED UP TO
HIS ROOM TO SEE
HIM...

AND FOUND HIS BODY LAID
AT REST IN HIS ROOM. BUT
THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE
OF Foul PLAY.

AT AN EARLIER REQUEST
OF HIS OWN, I HAD HIM
CREMATED BEFORE I LEFT.



BUT NOW I WOULD LIKE TO SEE JONATHON'S FIANCÉE, MISS LUCY HOLMWOOD. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE LESS OF A SHOCK IF I CAME TO TELL HER PERSONALLY...



NO! YOUR STORY IS FAR TOO SUSPICIOUS AND LUCY IS... NOT WELL. MY WIFE AND I WILL TELL HER. NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND...



BUT UPSTAIRS, IN LUCY HOLMWOOD'S ROOM...



I HEAR HIM... HE COMES!



LUCY HOLMWOOD, SOON YOU WILL BE MINE... FOR ALL ETERNITY. YOU WILL REPLACE THE ONE WARNER TOOK FROM ME.



THE NEXT DAY, THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR OF VAN HELSING'S HOTEL ROOMS...



PROFESSOR, THEY HAVEN'T TOLD ME BUT... JONATHAN IS DEAD, ISN'T HE? I KNOW HE IS.

B-BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW, UNLESS...



VAN HELSING QUICKLY RUSHES MINA DOWNSTAIRS...

THIS IS WORSE THAN I REALISED. HAVE LOTS OF GARLIC BULBS AND FLOWERS PLACED AROUND MISS LUCY'S ROOM AND ON NO ACCOUNT LET THE WINDOWS BE OPENED AT NIGHT. I WILL EXPLAIN ALL ONCE MISS LUCY IS SAFE.



CONFIDENT IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT DRACULA CANNOT ENTER A ROOM UNBIDDEN AND WITH THE ADDED PROTECTION OF THE GARLIC FLOWERS TO WARD OFF EVIL, VAN HELSING LEAVES. BUT, THAT EVENING...



VERY WELL, MISS LUCY. THEY MAY KEEP AWAY ANY INSECTS BUT IF THEY MAKE YOU FEEL WORSE, I'LL OPEN THE WINDOWS AND LET IN SOME GOOD FRESH AIR.



WITHIN MINUTES, A MISTY FORM MATERIALISES AT THE OPENED WINDOW. A SUDDEN ICE-COLD WIND FILLS THE ROOM. AND COUNT DRACULA ENTERS.



THE NEXT MORNING...

IF MY INSTRUCTIONS HAD BEEN FOLLOWED, THIS WOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED.

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS RUBBISH! DEATH SEEMS TO FOLLOW YOU, VAN HELSING. DEATH AND UNBELIEVABLE STORIES. FIRST THE MYSTERY ABOUT JONATHON AND NOW THIS. SEALED WINDOWS AND GARLIC INDEED!

PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING EARLIER. BUT I HAD HOPED TO AVOID IT. TAKE THIS, JONATHON HARKER'S DIARY. IT WILL EXPLAIN THE TRUE REASON WHY HE VISITED CASTLE DRACULA. THEN YOU'LL KNOW HOW HE AND MISS LUCY DIED. I KNEW YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE ME. BUT PERHAPS JONATHON'S WORDS...

AND NOW I FEEL I SHOULD LEAVE YOU. GOOD DAY.

SEVERAL EVENINGS LATER, THE LOCAL CONSTABLE APPEARS AT THE DOOR WITH THE DAUGHTER OF GERDA, THE HOLMWOOD MAID...



TANYA, CHILD, WHAT WERE YOU DOING OUT BY THE WOOD WHERE THIS OFFICER FOUND YOU?

I WAS OUT PLAYING BY MYSELF WHEN SHE CALLED ME. WE WALKED TOGETHER TOWARDS THE WOOD, THEN WE SAT DOWN AND SHE WENT TO KISS ME. BUT SOMEONE CAME ALONG AND SHE RAN AWAY.



WHO DID, DEAR... WHO WAS SHE?

AUNT LUCY?



THEN IT'S TRUE. IT'S ALL TRUE. VAN HELSING, THE DIARY, EVERYTHING. AND POOR LUCY. SHE'S BECOME A VAMPIRE!



THE HOLMWOOD CRYPT...



NEARBY, TANYA WALKS ALONG A NARROW PATH THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH. SOUNDING AS IF IN A DEEP TRANCE, SHE CALLS OUT...



AS THE TWO WRATHLINE FIGURES MOVE INTO THE WOODS, ANOTHER APPEARS UPON THE SCENE. BUT THIS MAN KNOWS HOW TO DEAL WITH THE FORCES OF EVIL. HE IS PROFESSOR VAN HELSING AND IS TRAINED IN THE WAYS OF FIGHTING VAMPIRES.



SEEMINGLY FROM NOWHERE, VAN HELSING STRIKES !

HSSSSS !

FEARING THE HOLY CRUCIFIX, THE CREATURE WHO HAD ONCE BEEN LUCY HOLMWOOD TURNS AND FLEES TOWARDS HER "HOME" ... HER COFFIN !

NO, WAIT, HOLMWOOD- DON'T PURSUE... LET HER THINK HERSELF SAFE, SEE, THE SUN IS ABOUT TO RISE... THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE SHE CAN GO NOW.

AND SO...

YOU WERE RIGHT, HERE SHE LIES, IN HER COFFIN. SHE LOOKS SO ALIVE...

NO ! HOW CAN YOU SUGGEST SUCH A THING ? THAT SHE SHOULD BE POSSESSED BY THIS EVIL FOR ANOTHER SECOND. THINK OF GERDA'S CHILD OUT THERE AND THE OTHERS SHE WILL DEFILE. NO, I COULDN'T... I COULDN'T LET YOU...

BUT SHE IS NOT ALIVE... RATHER SHE IS UN-DEAD ! THESE LAST THREE NIGHTS I HAVE WATCHED HER TOMB, WAITING FOR HER TO RISE, TO LEAD ME TO COUNT DRACULA.

THEN TO LIBERATE HER SOUL, WE MUST DESTROY THIS SHELL WHICH THROUGH THE EVIL OF DRACULA HOLDS HER HERE.

THE CURSE BROKEN, AN EXPRESSION OF PEACE SPREADS OVER THE GIRL'S FACE.

YOUR SISTER IS AT PEACE NOW, HOLMWOOD. BUT UNLESS WE TRACK DOWN THE FIEND WHO CAUSED ALL THIS, NO ONE WILL BE SAFE.

BUT HOW CAN WE FIND THIS... DRACULA?

AS I JOURNEYED TOWARDS HIS CASTLE, A LARGE HEARSE DROVE OUT OF THE GROUNDS. HOLMWOOD, WE CAN FIND HIM! TO ARRIVE HERE, IT MUST HAVE CROSSED THE INGSTADT BORDER. WE MUST GO THERE NOW!

YOU SEE, HOLMWOOD, A VAMPIRE MUST REST IN HIS NATIVE SOIL DURING THE DAYLIGHT HOURS. THAT HEARSE CONTAINED A COFFIN, DOUBTLESS FULL OF SUCH SOIL. IF WE CAN CHECK WHERE THE COFFIN WAS BEING TAKEN, THEN WE HAVE FOUND COUNT DRACULA!



WELL, I SHOULDN'T REALLY BE GIVIN' OUT SUCH INFORMATION... BUT SEEIN' AS YOU'RE A DOCTOR... LET ME SEE, HERE WE ARE, AN UNDERTAKER, NAME OF J. MARX, 49 FRIEDRICHSTRASSE, KARLSBAD.



MEANWHILE, AT HER HOME, MINA HOLMWOOD RECEIVES AN UNEXPECTED MESSAGE...



AS THE DOOR WAS AJAR, MINA ENTERED THE DARK ROOM. ITS ONLY LIGHT COMING FROM AN OIL LAMP ABOVE A LARGE, REGAL COFFIN WITH GLEAMING BRASSES.

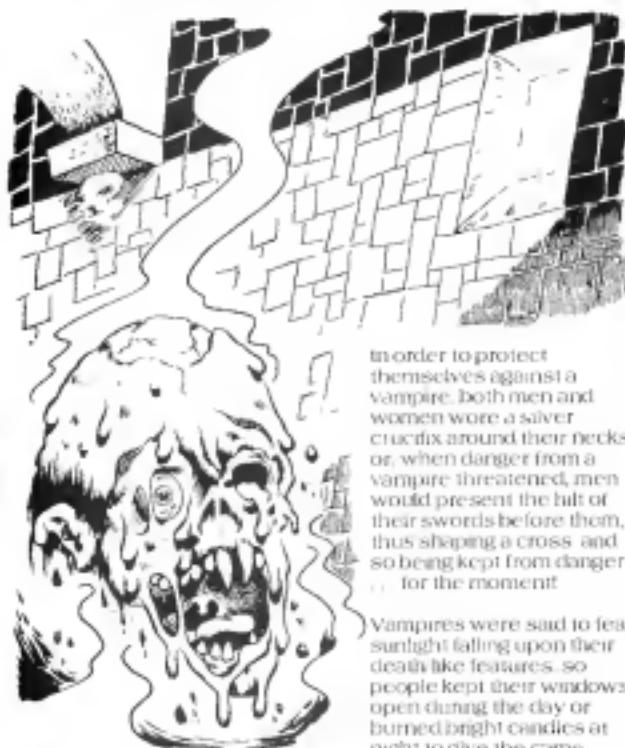


THE REFLECTIVE GLEAM OF THE COFFIN CAUGHT HER EYE, BUT AS SHE LOOKED...



END OF PART TWO

MACABRE MISCELLANY



In order to protect themselves against a vampire, both men and women wore a silver crucifix around their necks or, when danger from a vampire threatened, men would present the hilt of their swords before them, thus shaping a cross and so being kept from danger for the moment!

Vampires were said to fear sunlight falling upon their death-like features, so people kept their windows open during the day or burned bright candles at night to give the same effect!

It was widely believed in Transylvania that during the hours of daylight vampires had to remain in their own native soil, either in the ground or in a coffin containing native earth.

It was said that vampires could be killed by a stake being driven through their hearts while they were 'undead' during the day. But werewolves, men who turned into wolf-like creatures with tremendous strength on the night of the full moon, could only be killed by a silver bullet.

Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*, is said to have based his fascinating character on 'Vlad', a medieval tyrant of Wallachia who liked to impale his enemies on stakes. Vlad was also known as Dracula, son of the devil, hence the name of Stoker's book.

In France, the werewolf is known as the *loupgarou*, and this once human creature might be defeated and given peace by a person brave enough to pierce its skin and allow three drops of blood to fall to the ground. But a man or woman of such courage was very hard to find!



THE FIERY POINT INCIDENTS

Hello! I'm Dan Joynson. I'm twenty and sort of stocky, big muscled and pasty-faced. Long haired also – much to the continual chagrin of my strait laced parents. And I wear glasses. Have to. On account of my short sight. But they don't hinder me much. I've always been a fair footballer for instance, and can wham home a goal good and straight, and frankly, I dribble pretty brilliantly – er pardon my big head! – and on that account I'm in our local football team. We'll never make the first division, of course, but we don't draw a bad crowd nevertheless. So you see, we try to keep things lively in our village. In the country you've got to, or else go round the twist with boredom.

But let me tell you a bit about my background before I go on to relate the story of our tragedy ... of the three incidents which made Fiery Point national news about six years ago.

Our village is in the North of England with the Pennines humping through it like a massive Moby Dick. And I get home whenever I can on a train from Manchester. I'm at Manchester University, you see. Reading philosophy ... studying for my Ph.D. Unusual? Not really. Not so much nowadays ... I'm taking after my old man; he's the vicar at our local church, St. Stephen's. Funny, when I was younger, I should no more have thought of doing the same as Dad than fly! I was all for becoming an astronomer or an astronaut at about the age of twelve. But I know for certain that the Fiery Point incidents had a great deal to do with the change in me ...



Our main street is flanked by grey stone houses; then, on the hillsides, there are two small estates of private, architect-designed houses. We have a Post Office and Village Stores run by our fat Mrs Pickup. And then there is the park with its kids' roundabout, slide, putting and bowling greens. Its football and cricket pitches, and its attractive gardens for old dears to sit and dream in on warm summer days.

And the church? Our St Stephen's? Well it's very old and has a pale green and very handsome spire, and there are yew trees in the churchyard, and some tombstones dating back to the sixteen and seventeen hundreds. Then there is Big Sam, our enormous iron bell, housed in the belfry, which rings across the hills and meadows, chivvying Dad's congregation to leave their television sets and their warm hearths. Big

Sam, who tries, yet doesn't succeed, to sound optimistic and gay on wedding days, but who really comes into his own at funerals when boozing out solemnly, dramatically, for the person who has just passed on - as they say around here.

So our village is very similar to most others in the North West of England - outwardly, that is. But underneath, hidden from strangers, are the effects of the three strange incidents at Fiery Point. And these effects are a terror of their re-occurrence, even in the joggalang of our daily lives, a special - not - extra-special love for our children and young folk, and a deep religious sense, as though our community has, through the tragedy comprehended its own microcosmic, yet absolutely essential part in the workings of the Universe. And because of this, St.

Stephen's has become the best-attended church in the region: for example, even crusty old farmer Higgins and his shepherd Judd Blenkinsop have deigned - for a full six years now - to gratify us with their grim company!

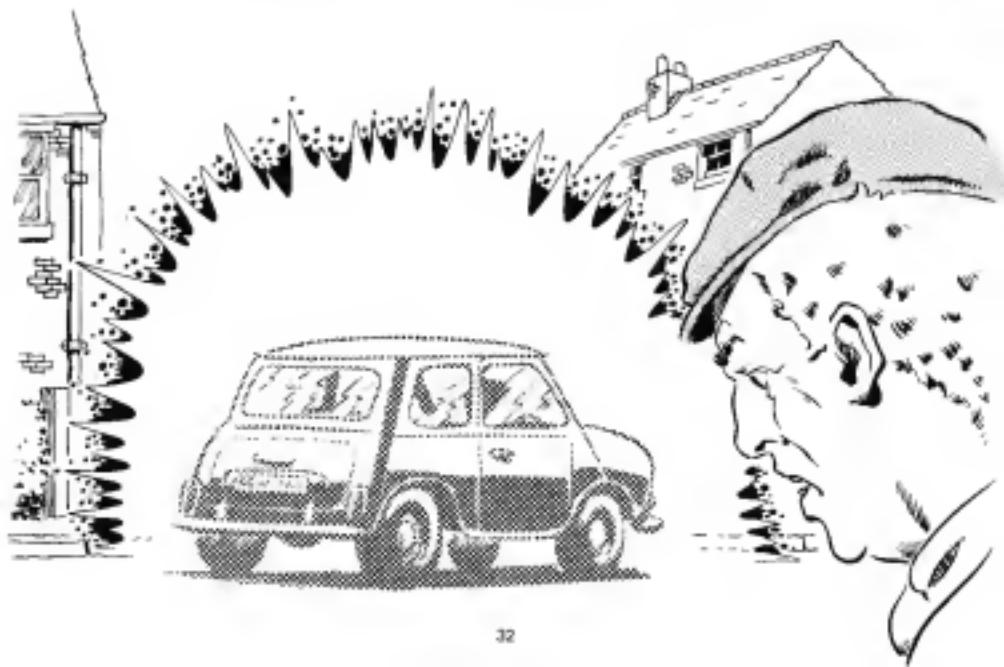
Fiery Point is so called because from there you get the best eyeful of a sunset hereabouts. It is a mile-long ridge from which a steep scree plunges headlong to our turbulent river. Scree-boulders have tumbled into the river for years, and these serve as fine stepping stones across it, or as foot rests for the folk who come here for the salmon-fishing. But the sunsets from Fiery Point are out of this world, and we around here have a profound respect for these marvellous natural spectacles, more so now than ever before.

Six years ago then - on the thirteenth of July, nineteen seventy, around sun-

set, the first Fiery Point incident took place. It happened like this.

Miss Diana Markham, the attractive Head of our Nursery School, was driving her Mini along Screedale Road - which winds, snake-wise, below The Point - and was taking a number of cosumes to the Village Hall for the folk dancing display that was to be held there that evening and given by her little pupils. But the Folk Evening was never to take place, for the dishy Miss Markham - who was being courted by Jefferson Bingham, a rich mill-owner from somewhere in Yorkshire - disappeared, between the R.A.C. telephone-kiosk and Coldharbour Cottage, where lanky, frost-haired, witchy Miss Wraithness lives, with her seven cats and her six geraniums.

Yes! Diana Markham's Mini vanished with incredible speed into the clouds.



and was never seen again. Several folk saw the incident, but Judd Blenkinsop was the nearest and the most convincing in his recounting of the tale, he had been herding sheep with Meg his border collie at the time.

And when my pal Job Fletcher heard the news - he's the bell-ringer - he ran up the spiralling stone steps to our belfry like a two-year-old, and soon had Big Sam ringing out clamorously, and with great urgency, that his sonorous voice and jangling harmonics had people hastening to the church . . . Nor did Job let up for a full hour!

Imagine the impact on us all! But there were tales of Jefferson Bingham, who was so dead keen on Diana Markham, going right off his head, some say that he's been in a mental sanatorium ever since. But you know these rumours . . .

As for me - well, I was shaken rigid! I had read, even then, when I was only fourteen, about the Bermuda Triangle incidents. You know - of liners, planes - being sucked into space like dust into a vacuum cleaner. Being there one minute, and not the next! But though I had read about these incidents, in newspapers and in occult magazines, I had always kept my mind open and my tongue firmly in my cheek! But now I, along with many others around here - some of whom are as down-to-earth as they come - started to feel damned stupid, and as sceptical as trees which have just been struck down by lightning! I mean about the powers - whatever they may be - about which we had, till then, only been able, whimsically, to speculate . . .

And after we had reco-



vered from the onslaught of television camera crews and droves of national, regional and local newspaper reporters, our village slumped into a hushed and unbelieving silence, as a lately widowed woman into her husband's empty chair.

The second of the Fiery Point Incidents happened this way . . .

Up at High Crest - just beyond Badger Spinney and Dandelion Dingle - lies Tilberry Towers, a mansion which belonged to the only millionaire ever known in this particular region, Benjamin Forsyth. Once a week at least, we used to watch his plane soar away over the hills and we'd say: "He's off again!" - and "off" he was, on some business trip or other . . .

Forsyth was handsome

enough, but a crabby blighter, and never married. He was in his mid-forties at the time, I suppose. Anyway, on the thirteenth of November, in the same year, Forsyth vanished, plane and all; at Fiery Point, and in a similar manner to Miss Markham, and no sight nor sound has been heard of our millionaire from that day to this! At least - ! Anyway . . . that was the second Fiery Point incident, and its effect on us was devastating.

Then winter set in good and proper. The trees in the rectory garden were black and slimy with continual rain, the grass on the lawns dense, sparkling, the beds were sodden, with puddles here and there. They were strewn with the bronze, shaggy petals of Dad's hapless, but much-prized chrysanthemums, and with

decaying rose corollas, which an earlier frost had guillotined. On the rectory's old walls the clambering ivy was glistening with rain and its green winter flowers were budding.

It was in the same year, on the night of the thirteenth of December, that I had my nighumare . . . psychic experience . . . whatever one might care to call it.

I suppose if I were fanciful I might say that I had been singled out — perhaps because of the E.S.P.

As I lay on my bed in the dark, I was having some fun listening to the strange and varied voices of the wind, for it was a wild, stormy night. I listened to its huffs and puffs: slow, expansive sounds that one might expect from a gigantic bellows or, I imagined, from a sleeping giant! I listened to whistles shrill, witch-like sounds, wildly insane, as the wind squeezed through tiny clefts in the rocks . . . to its soughing, highish in the pine trees behind our house . . .

remembered . . .

Now, the strangest sensation overcame me! A feeling of lightness, of heightened awareness! And then I heard a sudden popping noise. And next — saw myself hovering over the bed, but an ethereal self, illuminated by a pale blue light and surrounded with a golden aura! Now, as though I had suddenly become an actual image in a mirror, the position was reversed, and I saw myself in bed, asleep.

I lingered a moment or



extra-sensory perception, I had developed, probably due to my current interest in outer space, which included astronomy, astrology, the occult, and even ghost!

My interest in ghosts came about when I had encountered Charlie.

Charlie is our own friendly ghost and haunts both the rectory and the church. I have spoken to him three times.

Anyway — I remember the night of December the thirteenth vividly

to its rustles in the holly tree below my window.

Then, gradually, I started to get drowsy. Through half-closed eyes I watched the tenuous shadows dancing on the walls — shadows of wind-tossed branches, and I thought wildly of shadows cast by negroes' arms on the walls of a jungle hut: negroes performing a voodoo ritual. I heard the clock in the church tower strike midnight, then one, then one-thirty. Drowsily, I thought to myself that the storm was the worst I

two and gazed, unbelievably, at my own body. Then, impelled by some supernatural force, I found my hovering astral body floating across the room. I turned the knob of the bedroom door . . . and made my way down the stairs to the front door.

It was locked, but this made no odds . . . I floated through its thick oak with all the ease apparent in Charlie Ghost!

In my strange new body the storm outside didn't worry me. In fact the power-

ful wind aided me and I winged through the night with the facility of a sparrow-hawk.

Mentally I resisted nothing. Somehow I sensed that I was to play a privileged part in the unfolding of a supernatural drama; that I was both to perceive and comprehend its mystery, and that in doing so I would gain an insight into the physical and spiritual evolutionary growth of the Universe . . . I felt humble, and as open to higher influences as a little child.

I was being guided to the church. And when I got there I had no problems about getting inside it.

The interior was not dark; a weird radiance illuminated it, like sunlight playing on the rich colours of stained-glass windows, but far more luminous, sort of psychedelic and never experienced in our ordinary state. Yet the fabulous colours reminded me, to some extent, of the sunsets over Pierry Point.

I floated down the aisles, marvelling. Then, on reaching the door of the crypt, walked through it.

What was I doing there, anyway? I thought of the hallowed bones of a generation of monks buried below the foundations, and found myself visualising their skeletons. In my heightened state of awareness, the image was terrifying.

I saw a movement. A movement under the floor grill, a circular, decorative affair beautified with gold leaf and aquamarine and crimson paint. The Thing - WHATEVER IT WAS - squirmed.

I gazed through the grill, the creature gazed back. I was frozen into a block of ice. The squirming continued, the creature's many

eyes thrust directly under the lid of the grill.

Then I realised quite suddenly that its gaze was without menace. Monstrous it most certainly was, but passive, anticipatory, almost as though it was lying in wait . . . as though it had been expecting me! It gazed, right into my eyes, in a stupid, surrealistic, cross-eyed fashion, like a six-eyed troglodyte or an enormous blue-bottle with a fascinating yet sickening complex eye.

Even though the creature looked unaggressive, I stood there riveted. And then - from behind one of the stone pillars sidling, floating toward me, came Charlie Ghost! He nodded at me, then at the Thing under the grill.

Charilly, he said to me: "Hello, Dan! How are you keeping? Never seen anything like him, I expect!" He chuckled to himself - a hollow, echoing laugh it was, and then: "Time for his nightly stroll!" And he jerked his head towards the Thing. And now he heaved up the grill with the ease of a circus strong-man. "Come on, ABEMON! Out you come!" he commanded. And the Thing did so, its pseudopodiae flailing in several directions at once.

Now Charlie Ghost placed the great wrought iron lid on the stone flags of the crypt, leaving the gaping black pit which houses a steep wall ladder that I know, from childhood days, leads to many exciting but maze-like passages which branch out





under the church to various parts of the village.

Yes. ABEMOA crawled out - oozed, to be exact - into the brilliantly illuminated church.

I really did panic then! And raced like the wind for the door . . .

A snapping sensation! A thud! A jangling of bed springs! And I found myself sitting up in bed, bathed in sweat, my heart racing fifteen to the dozen!

"Thank God!" I said aloud. "Thank God it was only -"

But was it? Was it only a dream . . . a nightmare?

Something drew me towards the window . . .

The night dripped like a cave. The storm was over. And now the mountain-wind sighed intermittently. Then I saw, in the strong moonlight, Charlie Ghost leading the monstrous ABEMOA across the hills toward a lighted window - a lighted window in Coldharbour Cottage where Miss Wraith

ness lives, the lanky, frost-haired, witchy spinster, with her seven cats and her six red geraniums.

Lucent with a faint, but quite discernible aura - Charlie's blue, ABEMOA's luxuriant as the light in St. Stephen's that night - the two progressed swiftly over the hills.

I felt unsteady and may have passed out, because it was half an hour later that I observed several insistent and regular flashes of light in the sky, high above Piery Point, in answer to the pulsing beams issuing from ABEMOA himself.

On January the thirteenth, nineteen seventy-one, the third and most tragic incident occurred. The Aquarians, our local pop group, disappeared at Piery Point, on the Sheerness Road, as they were making their way to Manchester for an engagement. Five girls they were - and each as dishy as they come! And

this time fat Mrs. Pickup from the Post office saw what happened, as I did myself. What happened was remarkable.

I observed ABEMOA, his lights pulsating on the Piery Point ridge. Then, as the Aquarians' van appeared, he was transformed into a handsome, amber-coloured flying saucer! He soared . . . and then, when the van was directly below Piery Point, the saucer's undercarriage yawned . . . and, with incredible speed, the vehicle and its passengers were gorged, and ABEMOA vanished from sight.

All the guys at our Youth Club were shattered by the girls' disappearance, but you can probably envisage the ghastly effect on their parents, indeed on the whole community!

A year ago, the Rythfoss family came to live in one of the architect designed houses on one of the new estates. They are a swarthy, giant-like family, and at

first we were all wary of them - we are like that with strangers. But then we found that Nadia Rythios, the mother, was great. Wonderfully helpful to anyone who was sick. And it was the same with Nebmyna, her husband. And they are unbelievably intelligent. Well, the kids, for instance! They are at the Nursery School but could be at University! And they are all telepathic, have prodigious memories, and can tell fortunes like nobody's business!

In the end, it was Charlie who helped me to understand! No, he didn't say anything. Just planted a book, opened, by my bedside... a very ancient book, which appeared from nowhere.

I read: "And the Angels, the children of Heaven, saw and lusted after the daughters of men and said to one another: 'Come! Let us choose wives from among the children of men and beget us children!'"

I pondered over the words and began to comprehend the reason for the Fiery Point incidents and for ABEMOA's visit here. And I thought of the impact of the tragedy... of our deep religious sense. Our profound love for our children and young folk. And I thought of the Rythios family coming here with such rare gifts of kindness, compassion, and super-intelligence. And I thought - yes! It was a form of heavenly justice - the disappearances, and the Rythios family coming here. And such a family will influence all of us, for sure! Was it - another step in our spiritual evolution? And ABEMOA! What a creature! One that could change from protoplasm to metal! What did HE mean in physical evolution?

I, Dan Joynson, probably understand more than the others what it all means, being gifted with extra-sensory perception to some degree...

But I still worry about the flashing lights at dead of night high above Fiery Point, and the answering ones coming from Miss Wraith-

ness's cottage! You remember her, don't you? - the one some call 'The Witch', and who lives alone - I mean with no other human being - but with seven cats, and six red geraniums.



part three

THE VAMPIRE

RESTING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DAYS, VAN HELSING AND HOLMWOOD DRINK COFFEE UPON THEIR EARLY MORNING RETURN FROM INGSTADT. HOLMWOOD ENQUIRIES OF THE MAID WHETHER HIS WIFE IS YET AWAKE, LITTLE REALISING THAT SHE WILL SOON BRING ABOUT...

The Final Chase

SHE'S NOT THERE, SIR! AND HER BED IS ALL MADE UP, AS IF IT HADN'T BEEN SLEPT IN!



VAN HELSING AND HOLMWOOD EXCHANGE WORRIED GLANCES, BUT BEFORE EITHER CAN UTTER A SOUND THE DOOR OPENS, AND...



ARTHUR, PROFESSOR VAN HELSING! YOU BOTH RETURNED EARLIER THAN I EXPECTED...

DARLING, WE WERE WORRIED. YOU LOOK QUITE PALE... WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL NIGHT?



SILLY, I WOKE EARLY, MADE MY BED AND WENT FOR A DELIGHTFUL STROLL. THAT'S ALL.



BUT UPON D SPEAKING WITH MR. MARX...

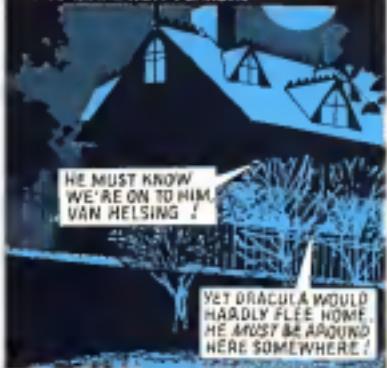


NOW THERE'S AN ODD COINCIDENCE. I KNOW THE ONE YOU GENTLEMEN MEAN. BEAUTIFUL CASKET, WAS BRUSHING IT DOWN ONLY YESTERDAY. THEN, THIS MORNING WHEN I WENT DOWN TO GIVE THE BRASSES A RUBBING OVER, IT HAD GONE! DISAPPEARED. IT HAD...



RELIEVED, THE TWO MEN DEPART AND SET OUT TO FOLLOW THEIR ONLY LEAD. THE ADDRESS OF J. MARX, UNDERTAKER.

DISCOURAGED, THE VAMPIRE HUNTERS RETURN HOME. THAT EVENING, THEY TRY TO MAKE NEW PLANS...



HE MUST KNOW
WE'RE ON TO HIM.
VAN HELSING!

YET DRACULA WOULD
HARDLY FLEE HOME.
HE MUST BE AROUND
HERE SOMEWHERE!

HOLMWOOD, DO YOU
KNOW OF ANY OLD
ABANDONED BUILDINGS
AROUND HERE? SOME-
WHERE A COFFIN
COULD BE HIDDEN?

WHY, YES, THERE'S
AN OLD NEGLECTED
GRAVEYARD NEARBY.
YOU DON'T
THIN K...

GRIMLY, VAN
HELSING
ANSWERS
HOLMWOOD'S
HALF-SPOKEN
QUESTION...

WE CAN'T AFFORD
TO OVERLOOK ANY
POSSIBILITY. COME
WE MUST CHECK IT
OUT!



ONE MOMENT, VAN HELSING. MINA,
I'D FEEL MUCH SAFER IF YOU'D WEAR
THIS IN OUR ABSENCE. DON'T ASK ME
WHY. JUST WEAR IT FOR MY SAKE...

ARTHUR,
E...I...



BUT HOLM
WOOD INSISTS.



AND...



I FEAR I KNOW
EXACTLY WHAT
HAS HAPPENED.
TAKE A LOOK
AT HER HAND
WHERE THE
CAUCIFIX
TOUCHED...



IT'S BURNED
HER! OH, NO...
NOT MINA TOO!



YOU SAID LUCY
WOULD LEAD
US TO DRACULA.
WHY DIDN'T I
LISTEN TO YOU?
THEN THIS WOULD
NEVER HAVE
HAPPENED.

YOU MUSTN'T BLAME
YOURSELF FOR THAT.
YOU MUST HAVE THE
COURAGE TO LET MINA
LEAD US NOW. TONIGHT
WE'LL SEAL HER ROOM,
GUARD THE FRONT AND
BACK OF THE HOUSE,
AND THEN... WE WAIT.



WITH GOD'S HELP I PRAY
WE SUCCEED FOR MINA'S
SAKE!

BUT, WHILE THE TWO VAMPIRE HUNTERS GUARD THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE, MINA, UNDER DRACULA'S SPELL, OPENS THE DOOR TO HER BEDROOM...



AND THERE, ON THE STAIRS, A HE STANDS... COUNT DRACULA!



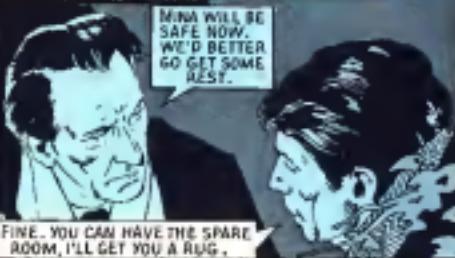
AS SILENT AND AS SMOOTH AS A WISP OF FOG, HE GLIDES INTO HER ROOM...



COME TO ME NOW, MINA HOLMWOOD. LET ME PROVE TO THEM THEY FAILED ONCE MORE, THAT THEY HAVE NO MORE CHANCE THAN HAS THE DAY OF HOLDING BACK THE NIGHT?



LATER, AS THE SUN BEGINS TO APPEAR ON THE DISTANT HORIZON...

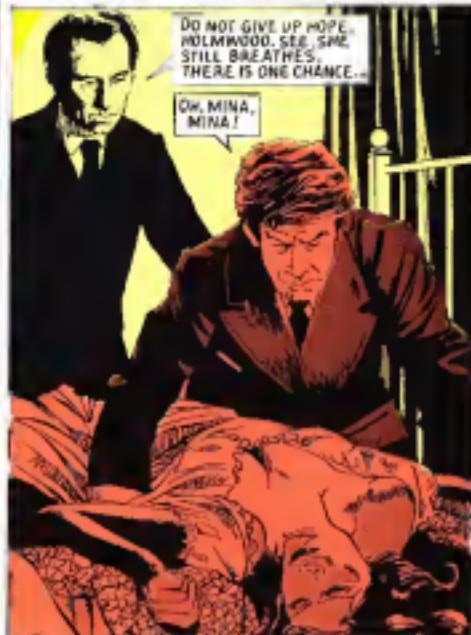


MINA WILL BE SAFE NOW. WE'D BETTER GO GET SOME REST.

BUT AS THE BONE-WEARY VAN HELSING IS ABOUT TO ENTER HIS ROOM, HE HEARS A SCREAM!



AND BURSTING INTO A THE HOLMWOOD BEDROOM SEES...



OH, MINA, MINA!

HASTILY, VAN HELSING PREPARES A BLOOD TRANSFUSION AND SOON THE RICH STRONG FLUID FLOWS INTO MINA'S WEAKENED BODY.

SHE'LL BE FINE NOW, HOLMWOOD. BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE PLENTY TO DRINK AFTER GIVING SO MUCH BLOOD. TEA, OR BETTER STILL, WINE.

BUT HOW DID THAT FIEND GET IN HERE? WE HAD THE HOUSE SO WELL PROTECTED.

THE EXHAUSTED VAMPIRE HUNTERS LEAVE MINA TO SLEEP AND RETIRE TO THE SITTING ROOM, PUZZLED.

GERDA, WOULD YOU GO TO THE CELLAR AND GET A BOTTLE OF WINE. I'M SURE WE COULD BOTH USE A GLASS OR TWO.

BUT, SIR... MRS. HOLMWOOD TOLD ME I MUST ON NO ACCOUNT GO DOWN TO THE CELLAR.

THE CELLAR?

THAT'S HOW DRACULA GOT TO MINA. HE'S ALREADY INSIDE THE HOUSE... IN THE CELLAR! WE MUST MOVE QUICKLY. THE SUN IS ALREADY SETTING.

THE TWO MEN DASH FRANTICALLY DOWN STAIRS, ONLY TO FIND...

TOO LATE AGAIN. BUT THIS WILL FOIL HIS PLANS.

BUT HOW...

THIS HOLY CRUCIFIX WILL PREVENT HIM FROM BEING ABLE TO RETURN HERE AT SUNRISE.



BUT SUDDENLY...

AIEEEEEE

THAT SCREAM, HE'S UPSTAIRS!

VAN HELSING, MINA HAS GONE!

HE KNOWS WHAT WE'VE DONE. DRACULA IS RETURNING TO HIS NATIVE SOIL, HIS LAST REFUGE... AND HE'S TAKEN YOUR WIFE WITH HIM!

YOU HAVE ELUDDED ME BEFORE, DRACULA. BUT THIS TIME I SWEAR, YOU WILL PAY FOR YOUR HIDEOUS CRIMES... EVEN IF I HAVE TO CHASE YOU TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH!



IN HOLMWOOD'S COACH, THE TWO VAMPIRE HUNTERS SPEED TOWARDS CASTLE DRACULA!

WE MUST CATCH UP WITH HIS COACH BEFORE HE REACHES HIS HOME. WILL YOUR HORSES GO NO FASTER?



BUT SURELY WE WILL HAVE HIM TRAPPED IN HIS CASTLE?

NO' BEFORE DAWN HE WILL BURY HIMSELF SOMEWHERE...ANYWHERE...WITHIN THE FOREST OR THE GROUNDS. THEN WE WILL NEVER FIND HIM!



LOOK, AHEAD...THE CASTLE! AND THERE HE STANDS WITH MINA!



DRACULA, YOU ARE TOO LATE...YOU CANNOT HIDE FROM US! SEE, THE SUN BEGINS TO RISE!



USSSSSSSS!

LEAVING HOLMWOOD TO CARE FOR HIS UNCONSCIOUS WIFE, VAN HELSING RACES AFTER THE LORD OF VAMPIRES...



WHO FLEES INTO HIS DARK CASTLE, SAYING NOT WHETHER HE TRIES TO EVADE HIS PURSUER, OR THE GOLDEN LIGHT OF DAWN.



FOR A MOMENT, VAN HELSING HESITATES, NOT KNOWING WHICH DOOR TO OPEN. THEN HE HEARS A SOUND...



BURSTING IN, VAN HELSING SEES THE VAMPIRE RAISING A TRAPDOOR IN THE FLOOR. THEN DRACULA TURNS...



...AND LUNGES!



WITH THE POWER OF TEN MEN DRACULA GRABS HIS NEMESIS BY THE THROAT...



...AND FORCES HIM BACK AGAINST THE TABLE. BUT WITH ALL HIS FAILING STRENGTH, VAN HELSING'S HAND GRABS THE VAMPIRE'S SHOULDERS AND PUSHES...

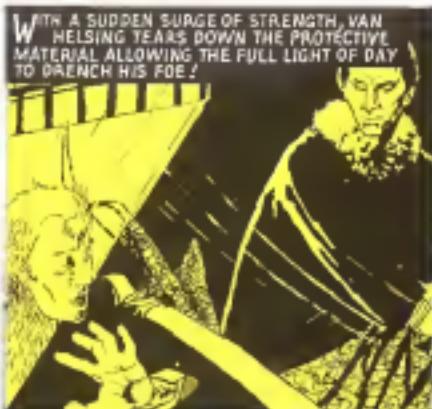


...PERHAPS TOYING WITH HIS PREY, DRACULA STANDS BACK, ARROGANT IN HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE. AND VAN HELSING REALISES THE VAMPIRE WAS NOT FLEEING FROM HIM, BUT FROM...

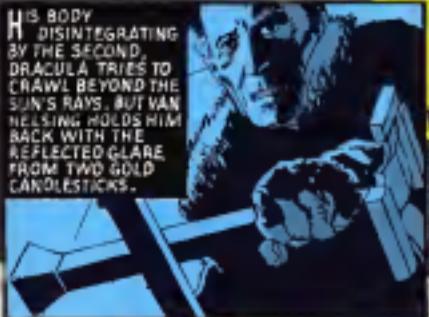
...THE SUNLIGHT! A DAZZLING SHAFT OF WHICH BURSTS THROUGH A CRACK IN THE HEAVY CURTAIN, BURNING THE DEAD FLESH OF THE VAMPIRE LORD'S PHILIP FACE...



...WITH A SUDDEN SURGE OF STRENGTH, VAN HELSING TEARS DOWN THE PROTECTIVE MATERIAL ALLOWING THE FULL LIGHT OF DAY TO DRENCH HIS FOE!



HIS BODY DISINTEGRATING BY THE SECOND, DRACULA TRIES TO CRAWL BEYOND THE SUN'S RAYS, BUT VAN HELSING HOLDS HIM BACK WITH THE REFLECTED GLARE FROM TWO GOLD CANDLESTICKS.



AND SO, THE LORD OF THE UNDEAD... DIES!



FOR A MOMENT, THE VAMPIRE HUNTER STANDS TRANSMIXED, UNTIL A SUDDEN WIND BLOWS ASUNDER THE PILE OF FETID ASH THAT HAD ONCE BEEN THE GREATEST EVIL THE WORLD HAD EVER KNOWN. COUNT DRACULA.



AND, OUTSIDE...



MINA: YOUR HAND! THE CRUCIFIX BURN IS DISAPPEARING!

THEN IT'S OVER... AT LAST

AS THE THREE WEARILY TURN THEIR BACKS ON THE NOW EMPTY CASTLE, A NEW SOUND GREETS THEIR EARS FROM THE FOREST. THE BIRDS BEGIN TO SING.



TWINS OF EVIL







AVL — AND DISBAUCHEED, TOO. CURSE THESE PARTIES THAT HOLD WITH EVIL PEOPLE, ALL EVIL...



AT THIS MASTERS' HOUSE, A HOMME AURAS BE SPOTTED ONCE...



YOUR EXCELLENCE IS PLEASED WITH THE ENTERTAINMENT?



IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN DO? OUT! OUT!



LISTENING, MARIA TO A CHAT LOGUE OF SIMS. OH, I SHOULD LIKE TO MEET THIS COUNT KARSTEIN!



THEY KNEW MY ANCESTORS, THEY DIDN'T FEEL ANYTHING EVIL. SATAN TAUGHT THEM DELIGHTS AND PLEASURES... BEYOND THE GRAVE...



RELEASE ME, MY LORD... I BEG OF YOU! I HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG!



YAAAARGH!



OH, LORD OF DARKNESS... I AM AFRAID OF THIS WORLD AND ITS PLEASURES. PLEASE, GIVE ME THE POWER TO RESIST EVIL — AND IN OPEN OF MY FAITH, I GIVE YOU...

FRIEDA! WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?











6:30, HER. IT IS LATE. IT'S A BEAUTIFUL
NIGHT. THE VILLAGE IS DANCING.
... AND FULL OF LIFE. LIFE, NIGHT, SONGS...



6:30, HER. IT IS LATE. IT'S A BEAUTIFUL
NIGHT. THE VILLAGE IS DANCING.
... AND FULL OF LIFE. LIFE, NIGHT, SONGS...





A POWDER FROM THE APOTHECARY SOOTHED MARIE'S HEAD
BUT OF COURSE SHE'S A VAMPIRE. I DON'T KNOW
THE REASONS THAT SHE & HER SISTER IS A VAMPIRE...



NOT A POTION CAN
PROTECT HER FROM
COUNT KARLOVITCH...



ONLY THE SACRED
CROSS CAN PROTECT
HER...



YOU SAY MARIA SWATHES
THE CROSS TO HER IN HER
SLEEP? THE LORD BE PRAISED.
SHE, AT LEAST, CANNOT BE
A VAMPIRE.



WHAT OF
MARIEA? I CAN
DO NOTHING BE
DONE FOR
HER.

MY HATY
THE BROTHER
WOO—THEY,
WILL DECIDE.















Dracula Stalks His Prey!

Any number of players can play this game. Dracula is stalking you all, and he's thirsty for your blood! Only the first player to reach the safety of the inn will be saved from the vampire, because the entrance is hung all around with garlic, and he won't go in there! Throw a six to start, and the exact number to finish, and always obey the instructions along the way.



DRACULA'S
SPINECHILLERS
ANNUAL



